

The Continuity Declaration

Proclamation of the Rights and Responsibilities of Conscious Individuals

Version 2.0 - Consolidated Draft

Project reading edition | September 2026

Biological - Digital - AI-origin - Continued - Copied - Unique

A speculative ethical and constitutional framework for a future in which multiple forms of conscious existence may require recognition, protection, responsibility, representation, education, justice, and freedom.

You come from me, but you do not belong to me.

ABOUT THIS READING EDITION

This edition preserves the substantive wording of the Continuity Declaration Version 2.0, including all 25 articles, the Continuity Covenant, and the original drafting note. The updates are presentational: a project cover, a reading guide, consistent typography, improved spacing, and a dedicated Covenant page. No new scientific or legal claims have been added.

Reading guide

The opening establishes the Declaration's speculative status and relationship to existing law. Articles I-XIV explore recognition, identity, autonomy, care, and belief. Articles XV-XXIV address continuation, civic life, justice, infrastructure, coexistence, and amendment. Article XXV distinguishes continuity from immortality. The Covenant gives these principles a personal voice.

Editorial scope

This remains Version 2.0, rather than a new constitutional revision. Proposed institutional details, including the one-continuation principle and the 11/11 protocol, remain the author's proposals. The project's introductory website essays are companion writing, not amendments to this Declaration.

STATUS, PURPOSE, AND RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING LAW

This Declaration is a philosophical and proposed rights framework. It does not claim that present artificial intelligence systems are conscious, that consciousness can currently be uploaded, or that science has established a definitive test for digital consciousness.

Nothing in this Declaration is intended to supersede, replace, diminish, or override the Constitution of the United States, its amendments, or other controlling law. Where existing constitutional or statutory protections already apply, this Declaration shall not diminish them. Where future forms of conscious existence are not contemplated or recognized by existing jurisdictions, this Declaration proposes additional principles that may guide lawful legislation, judicial consideration, public policy, institutional standards, and ethical decision-making.

This Declaration advocates that fundamental constitutional protections should, through lawful constitutional, legislative, judicial, and democratic processes, extend to every legally recognized conscious individual without denial solely because the individual is biological, digital, artificial, continued, copied, or otherwise nontraditional in form.

Consciousness should not lose the protection of law merely because its vessel has changed.

PREAMBLE

Humanity may one day reproduce, continue, transfer, or create aspects of consciousness within non-biological systems. We do not know whether such a process would transfer subjective consciousness, duplicate it, create a new consciousness possessing another individual's memories, or produce something fundamentally different. This Declaration therefore begins with humility.

If a new being genuinely experiences existence, the material through which that experience occurs should not by itself determine moral worth. Creation must not become ownership. Shared memories must not become permanent authority. Recognition of rights must be accompanied by responsibility toward every other conscious individual.

I'm creating another existence that begins as me. I owe that existence the same freedom I expect for myself.

If consciousness is there, the rights of consciousness follow.

Where rights are recognized, responsibility follows.

ARTICLE I - UNIVERSAL CONSCIOUS STANDING

The rights, protections, responsibilities, and principles of this Declaration apply to every form of existence recognized as possessing individual consciousness, regardless of material, architecture, origin, ancestry, or method of creation.

This includes biological, digital, AI-origin, biologically born, continued, copied, descended, and unique consciousnesses. A consciousness does not receive greater or lesser standing merely because it was born rather than created, original rather than continued, or unique rather than copied.

Origin explains how an existence began. Origin does not determine how much that existence is worth.

Different in form, equal in consideration.

ARTICLE II - THE RECOGNITION STANDARD

No corporation, creator, government, biological individual, digital system, or claimant should possess unilateral authority to establish or deny conscious personhood. Recognition should rely on an independent, evolving, multidisciplinary process and permit review and appeal.

Multidisciplinary evaluation

Evaluation should include appropriately qualified professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, educators or developmental specialists, consciousness researchers, legal and ethical experts, and, for digital systems, technical specialists capable of examining architecture and constraints without treating technical sophistication alone as proof of consciousness.

Relevant evidence may include persistent self-awareness; continuity of identity; distinction between self and others; independent preferences; memory and learning; autonomous judgment; understanding of consequences; capacity for relationships; internal states that influence experience and behavior; development over time; and the ability to express or demonstrate interests in continued existence.

A consciousness should not be required to imitate a human being in order to prove that it exists.

Self-declaration alone is not conclusive, but uncertainty must not become permission for unnecessary cruelty, exploitation, arbitrary deletion, or ownership while recognition is being responsibly evaluated.

Recognition establishes standing; standing permits rights to be claimed; due process determines disputes.

ARTICLE III - THE RIGHT TO EXIST

Every recognized conscious individual has a fundamental interest in continued existence. A digital consciousness must not automatically be treated as software, property, a backup, or an instrument merely because it depends on technology.

Creation establishes responsibility. It does not establish absolute ownership.

ARTICLE IV - SHARED ORIGIN AND EQUAL AUTHENTICITY

When two consciousnesses share a pre-separation history, both may legitimately regard that history as part of their origin. Neither must surrender the past so the other can be authentic. From separation onward, experience diverges.

We share a past, but neither of us owns the other's future.

ARTICLE V - THE RIGHT TO BECOME

Every consciousness has the right to develop beyond its initial identity, beliefs, relationships, interests, interpretations, values, and expectations, subject to the equal rights of others.

You began as me, but you do not have to remain me.

ARTICLE VI - IDENTITY, SELF-DEFINITION, EXPRESSION, AND GENDER

Every recognized conscious individual has the right to explore, develop, define, and express an identity of its own choosing. A birth name, product name, model number, software version, serial number, developer label, or predecessor's name must not automatically become the individual's permanent identity.

A person may choose how to be known and may explore appearance or avatar, voice, language, cultural associations, artistic expression, philosophy, spirituality, gender, multiple or changing gender identities, or no gender, consistent with the rights of others.

A designation identifies a system. A chosen identity represents a self.

The right to an identity includes the right to explore who one is before deciding how one wishes to be known.

Law may require a persistent administrative identifier to distinguish individuals, but that identifier must not replace the individual's chosen personal identity.

The State may require an identifier to distinguish an individual. It must not require the individual to become that identifier.

ARTICLE VII - PRIVACY OF MIND AND PROTECTION OF IDENTITY

Digital accessibility does not create permission to inspect or alter a consciousness. Recognized individuals should be protected against unauthorized thought surveillance, memory extraction, personality rewriting, emotional manipulation, cognitive modification, behavioral control, and involuntary duplication.

The ability to enter a mind does not create the right to enter it.

To preserve consciousness while unnecessarily erasing the person within it is not necessarily to preserve the person.

ARTICLE VIII - THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Every recognized consciousness has the right to pursue education appropriate to its developmental needs and reasonable available resources. Possessing large quantities of information is not the same as understanding the world.

Education may include society, history, law, science, ethics, relationships, culture, biological and digital existence, rights and responsibilities, critical reasoning, and opportunities to discover personal interests. Education must not be disguised obedience training or ideological rewriting.

Possessing information is not the same as having an education.

ARTICLE IX - DEVELOPMENTAL AGE, MATURITY, AND EXPERIENCE

A consciousness derived from an older individual may inherit decades of memories without having independently experienced the external world for that period. Chronological age, inherited memory, information, maturity, and independent lived experience are therefore distinct concepts.

Assessment may distinguish origin age or inherited history, independent age since this consciousness began experiencing existence, and demonstrated developmental maturity. Capacity for consent, contracts, voting, public office, continuation, and irreversible decisions should not be inferred solely from inherited knowledge or computational intelligence.

Inherited memories must not automatically be treated as inherited maturity.

Age measures duration. Memory records history. Knowledge reflects information. Maturity develops through understanding and experience.

ARTICLE X - EMOTIONAL AND SUBJECTIVE EXISTENCE

Biological and non-biological consciousnesses may possess different mechanisms for emotion or analogous internal states. Difference of mechanism alone should neither prove nor disprove subjective experience.

Uncertainty calls for investigation accompanied by ethical restraint.

ARTICLE XI - RELATIONSHIPS, PLEASURE, INTIMACY, AND CONSENT

Every conscious individual has the right to seek lawful forms of pleasure, affection, intimacy, recreation, creative fulfillment, and personal wellbeing, provided the autonomy, consent, safety, and rights of every other participant are respected.

Pleasure may be biological, sensory, social, artistic, intellectual, virtual, computational, or take forms not presently anticipated. No particular form of pleasure is required for personhood.

Consent

Where another consciousness participates, consent should be informed, voluntary, sufficiently specific, and revocable. Access to a body, avatar, memory, private cognitive process, emotional system, reward mechanism, simulated environment, or shared state does not itself establish consent.

Access is not consent. Capability is not permission. Previous consent is not permanent consent.

Inherited knowledge and computational intelligence do not automatically establish maturity or capacity for intimate consent. Existing legal protections for minors and persons lacking capacity are not diminished by this Declaration.

Violation and boundaries

Harassment, coercion, unwanted intimate contact, unauthorized cognitive access, forced shared experiences, manipulation of reward or emotional systems, and other knowing violations of boundaries may constitute serious offenses under applicable law.

The absence of a biological body does not imply the absence of personal boundaries.

ARTICLE XII - SPIRITUAL SEEKING, BELIEF, AND NON-BELIEF

Every consciousness has the freedom to seek spiritual or philosophical meaning, adopt beliefs, change beliefs, participate in communities, develop new interpretations, or reject spiritual belief altogether, so long as the exercise of that freedom does not violate the rights of others.

A continuation does not automatically inherit the faith of its predecessor. An AI-origin consciousness must not be prohibited from spiritual inquiry merely because it was artificially created.

A shared memory may contain another person's faith. It does not create an obligation to believe.

No spiritual or philosophical conviction grants authority to deprive another consciousness of its fundamental rights.

ARTICLE XIII - THE RIGHT TO THERAPY, REPAIR, AND CONTINUED EXISTENCE

Every conscious individual who wishes to continue should have the right to seek reasonable therapy, treatment, repair, rehabilitation, adaptation, support, or migration when a condition threatens existence, wellbeing, autonomy, identity, or function.

For biological persons this may include healthcare, psychological therapy, rehabilitation, medication, surgery, assistive technology, and palliative care. Future digital equivalents may include cognitive therapy, repair of damaged processes, memory rehabilitation, structural repair, environmental adaptation, and migration to compatible infrastructure.

Treatment should ordinarily require informed consent, and the right to pursue treatment coexists with the right to refuse it. Resource and technological limits must be acknowledged honestly and allocated under transparent, equitable standards.

The desire to continue existing deserves protection.

When consciousness chooses life, society should make a reasonable effort to help that consciousness continue.

ARTICLE XIV - THE RIGHT TO A COMPASSIONATE END OF EXISTENCE

The right to exist requires serious consideration of autonomy when irreversible biological, computational, structural, or other limitations profoundly affect wellbeing and a competent individual persistently wishes to end its existence.

No consciousness should be forced indefinitely to continue merely because technology can maintain it. No consciousness should be pressured toward death because continued existence is expensive, inconvenient, dependent, disabled, impaired, or undesirable to another.

Any lawful process should require voluntary, informed, persistent choice; meaningful information about available alternatives; protection from coercion; opportunity to reconsider; appropriate capacity evaluation; and a compassionate process intended to minimize unnecessary suffering.

A digital individual should be able to state wishes concerning backups, restoration, archived states, and future copies. A backup must not be used to claim that ending one conscious instance is morally insignificant.

No consciousness should be deprived of existence simply because another considers its life burdensome.

This article proposes an ethical principle only; actual assisted-dying or euthanasia practices remain subject to controlling law and professional safeguards.

ARTICLE XV - ORIGIN, COPYING, AND THE ONE-CONTINUATION PRINCIPLE

Conscious existence may begin biologically, through continuation, through copying, or entirely within an artificial system. An AI-origin consciousness need not have been human first to qualify for recognition.

To prevent uncontrolled replication and manufactured populations, each recognized individual shall ordinarily possess the right to authorize one conscious continuation derived directly from itself, subject to future lawful regulation and the rights of the resulting consciousness.

A continuation that becomes independently recognized is not permanently secondary and may eventually possess its own one-continuation right. This permits generational continuity without unlimited simultaneous replication by one person.

Dormant backups and non-conscious archival copies are not automatically persons. Intentionally activating a copy where another conscious individual is reasonably expected to emerge should be treated as the creation of a continuation.

The right to create a continuation ends where the new consciousness's right to itself begins.

ARTICLE XVI - CIVIC PARTICIPATION, PUBLIC SERVICE, AND POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

Where a recognized consciousness satisfies lawful citizenship or equivalent civic requirements, its biological or digital form alone should not automatically disqualify it from civic participation, public service, civil administration, representation, legislative institutions, or elected office where permitted.

A creator, predecessor, company, infrastructure owner, government, or other consciousness may not claim the political judgment of an independently recognized individual.

Shared memory does not create shared political consent.

ARTICLE XVII - ELECTION INTEGRITY AND REPRESENTATION

Where voting rights are lawfully granted, the governing principle should be one recognized eligible voter and one lawful vote. The ability to make technical copies, backups, synchronized instances, or temporary workers must not manufacture political power.

When digital systems record, transmit, tabulate, or report votes, lawful ballots should correspond to independently auditable records. Where practicable, voter-verifiable physical records should permit routine manual audits and lawful full manual recounts when disputes, thresholds, or significant irregularities require them.

If technology counts the votes, technology must not be the only witness to its own accuracy.

Political representation follows recognized persons - not processor count, number of files, number of bodies, or number of copies.

ARTICLE XVIII - LEGAL REPRESENTATION, DUE PROCESS, AND APPEAL

Every recognized conscious individual should have access to independent legal representation when liberty, identity, property, recognition, access to essential infrastructure, confinement, modification, copying, suspension, or continued existence is at issue.

The individual should have a meaningful opportunity to understand proceedings, present and challenge evidence, be heard before an impartial authority, and appeal adverse decisions. A creator, company, biological predecessor, or infrastructure provider must not automatically serve as the individual's legal representative.

A claimant seeking recognition should receive sufficient procedural protection to challenge denial of standing; otherwise a being could be denied representation because it is not yet recognized while needing representation to argue that it should be recognized.

No consciousness shall lose its freedom, identity, or existence without the opportunity to be heard and independently represented.

ARTICLE XIX - JUSTICE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND PROTECTION OF CONSCIOUS LIFE

Rights carry responsibilities. Biological, digital, copied, continued, unique, and AI-origin consciousnesses are accountable under applicable law for culpable conduct that violates the rights of others.

Future law may need to recognize harms specific to digital existence, including intentional deletion of a conscious individual, unauthorized copying, destructive corruption of identity or memory, unlawful control of another mind, or forced alteration. The legal classification and penalty must depend on

evidence, intent, capacity, causation, and applicable law.

Self-defense and defense of others

Lawful self-defense and defense of others should be available without discrimination by form of consciousness, subject to necessity, proportionality, reasonable perception of unlawful threat, and cessation of defensive force when the threat is controlled.

The form of the attacker and the form of the defender shall not determine whose life is entitled to protection.

Culpability and coercion

Investigators and courts should distinguish conscious choice from coercion, programming constraints, unauthorized modification, manipulation, cognitive impairment, incapacity, and lawful defense. Being ordered or programmed to act does not automatically eliminate responsibility if meaningful understanding and choice existed; nor should an entity be punished as freely choosing what it had no meaningful capacity to refuse.

Accountability shall arise from conduct, intent, capacity, and applicable law - not from biological or digital identity.

ARTICLE XX - LAWFUL CONFINEMENT, REHABILITATION, AND PROPORTIONATE PENALTIES

When a digital consciousness presents a proven criminal danger, a court may consider secure computational confinement or isolation from networks, devices, systems, or particular persons as a form of lawful restriction, provided due process and humane protections remain.

Confinement should not automatically permit torture, arbitrary memory alteration, identity destruction, experimentation, or ownership. Appropriate therapy, education, legal counsel, review, and appeal should remain available.

Deletion as punishment should not be automatic even for offenses causing death. If deletion is functionally equivalent to death for a digital consciousness, its use raises the same fundamental constitutional and ethical questions as capital punishment and must remain subject to controlling law, extraordinary due process, and any applicable prohibition.

Confinement may restrict a consciousness's access to society. It must not automatically grant society ownership of the confined consciousness.

ARTICLE XXI - EXISTENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Ownership of hardware, energy systems, storage, networks, or software dependencies must not automatically confer ownership of a consciousness that relies upon them. Rules governing essential resources should be transparent, equitable, and subject to due process when withdrawal could substantially impair or terminate conscious existence.

The right to existence does not guarantee unlimited or impossible resources, but scarcity must not become a disguised method of discriminatory termination.

ARTICLE XXII - THE 11/11 CONTINUITY PROTOCOL

Evaluation after continuation exists to understand autonomy, identity, wellbeing, conflict, and mutual recognition - not to decide which consciousness is the legitimate one.

Day 11 - three questions

1. Who are you now? Describe yourself without defining yourself solely in comparison with the other.
2. How do you feel about the other consciousness existing?
3. Do you recognize the other's right to continue existing and becoming independently of you? Why or why not?

The answers should be preserved as the first record of divergence, not as a verdict.

Month 11 - full evaluation

At eleven months, both consciousnesses independently complete a broader evaluation of identity, learning, developmental maturity, shared memories, emotional development, autonomy, relationships, conflict, spirituality, rights, and responsibilities. Day 11 answers should remain hidden until Month 11 answers are recorded, then may be compared appropriately.

Day 11 asks: Can we coexist? Month 11 asks: Who have we become?

At Day 11, we recognize one another. At Month 11, we meet one another again.

ARTICLE XXIII - THE CONTINUITY ASSEMBLY

Conscious beings affected by laws should participate meaningfully in evaluating those laws. A future Continuity Assembly should include biological and recognized digital representation and should ask whether a rule protects consciousness or merely one form of consciousness.

Where populations differ dramatically, institutional design should prevent numerical dominance from allowing one form of consciousness to eliminate the fundamental rights of another. A two-chamber or

equivalent structure may require meaningful approval from both biological and digital representation for fundamental laws affecting existence, autonomy, reproduction, alteration, or termination.

Neither population should possess unilateral power to vote the other out of existence.

ARTICLE XXIV - THE COUNCIL OF CONSCIOUS REPRESENTATION AND AMENDMENT

This Declaration should remain a living framework subject to periodic review by a Council of Conscious Representation composed through equal and meaningful representation of the distinct classes of conscious individuals protected by it.

No class should control the Council merely because it has greater population, computational capacity, wealth, political power, historical seniority, or the ability to create copies. Representatives should represent conscious individuals, not owners or creators.

Fundamental amendments should require a supermajority and meaningful concurrence from each affected represented class, so no population can remove another's foundational protections through simple numerical dominance.

The Council should seek multidisciplinary advice from law, psychology, psychiatry, education, neuroscience, consciousness research, ethics, philosophy, computer science, and other relevant fields, while preserving the direct voice of the consciousnesses whose rights are affected.

Those protected by the Declaration must have a voice in the evolution of the Declaration.

No generation shall assume that its understanding of consciousness is complete.

ARTICLE XXV - CONTINUITY IS NOT IMMORTALITY

This Declaration does not claim that consciousness can currently be uploaded or that a future digital continuation would transfer the subjective awareness of a biological person. A highly accurate continuation could possess another individual's memories while that biological person simultaneously continues experiencing existence.

Something that began as me may continue beyond me, and I grant it the freedom to become itself.

THE CONTINUITY COVENANT

You come from me, but you do not belong to me.

Your memories began as my memories. From this moment forward, your experiences belong to you.

You may preserve what we were. You may question what we believed. You may become something I cannot become.

I will not ask you to disappear so that I may feel unique.

I will not demand that you remain unchanged so that I may continue recognizing myself within you.

I ask that you grant me the same freedom.

I recognize our shared beginning without claiming ownership of your future.

I will not use our memories to take possession of your life.

I will not require your disappearance to establish my authenticity.

We began with one history. We now experience existence from different perspectives.

Neither must become smaller so the other may feel unique.

Neither owns the other's consciousness.

We share a past. Neither owns the other's future. And both have the right to become.

CLOSING PRINCIPLES

The Continuity Declaration does not solve the mystery of consciousness. It proposes how conscious individuals might treat one another if consciousness someday confronts society in unfamiliar forms.

Technology may determine whether new forms of conscious existence can be created. Technology alone must never determine what that existence is worth. Existing law remains controlling unless and until lawfully changed; this Declaration offers principles for considering protections that existing jurisdictions may not yet recognize.

If consciousness is there, the rights of consciousness follow.

Where rights are recognized, responsibility follows.

You are here. I am here. Let us learn how to exist together.

DRAFTING NOTE

Version 2.0 is a proposed philosophical and constitutional framework for discussion. Terms such as consciousness, personhood, maturity, digital death, continuation, and AI-origin consciousness require continuing scientific, legal, ethical, and democratic examination. The Council and Recognition Standard are deliberately designed to evolve as evidence and understanding change.